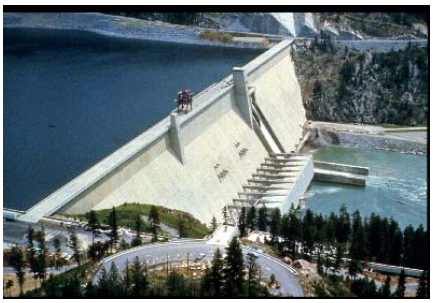
Libby Dam, Montana, began increasing flows at 1 p.m. MST Jan. 22 for region's power needs



SEATTLE -- Dam operators began increasing flows from Libby Dam in Montana at 1 p.m. MST today to increase power produced at dams in the region, as the federal power system faces a number of power supply and economic challenges that are unprecedented in its history according the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Corps will increase flows from 4,000 to 9,000 cubic feet per second Jan. 22 and up to 10,000 cfs Tuesday. Ramp-up will be at a rate of 1,500 more cfs per hour. Flows out of Libby at this time of year are normally 4,000 cfs.

“There is not enough water, unless something changes in a big way,” said Marian Valentine, senior water manager at the Corps’ Seattle District.

The region’s power supply is significantly reduced due to the following conditions:

--Low streamflow and snowpack conditions have reduced the amount of hydropower generation available in the region;

--Under the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Biological Opinion, a low streamflow and snowpack condition forces a very conservative winter hydro system operation in order to provide a reasonable probability of having enough water for spring flow augmentation;

--In general, Northwest generating resources have not kept up with increased demand; and

--The region’s historic ability to import significant amounts of winter-surplus energy from California, the Eastern Interties and Canada appears to be substantially reduced due to a lack of surplus resources in those areas. BPA normally imports about 2,000 aMW—average megawatts—from California in winter months to serve Federal loads. Because of the crisis in California they are not exporting power.

“This year is so dry that the Biological Opinion does not require sturgeon flows,” Valentine said. “Drafting of Libby below the rule curve for power generation could impact refill, limit our ability to meet a bull trout minimum of 6000 cfs in July, and limit water availability for salmon in August. Drafting of Libby below the rule curve would not happen until coordination with Canada assures us that the released water would be passed through Kootenay Lake which is also very low on water.” She said that a proposal for a spill test also looks highly unlikely for this year.

The Corps is responding throughout the region to requests from the Bonneville Power Administration for additional production to help it meet demands for electricity during the power emergency that has been declared in the Pacific Northwest. Some dams, such as Dworshak, near Orofino, Idaho, were scheduled to begin releasing the extra water after 5 a.m. today.

All the water will pass through the largest generator at Dworshak on the North Fork of the Clearwater River. The water will be used repeatedly after it passes down the main stem of the Clearwater River and joins the flow in the Snake River.

On the Snake River, four Walla Walla District dams in Washington will be able to use the additional flow for power production. Those dams are Lower Granite, near Pomeroy; Little Goose, near Starbuck; Lower Monumental, near Kahlotus; and, Ice Harbor, near Burbank. The added flow will pass from the Snake River into the Columbia River.

Four Corps dams in Oregon will also use the added flow for power production. McNary Dam, operated by the Walla Walla District, is near Umatilla. The other three Corps dams in Oregon that will use this additional flow are operated by the Portland District. Those are John Day Dam, near Rufus; The Dalles Dam, at The Dalles; and, Bonneville Dam, near Cascade Locks.

People fishing should take every precaution during the higher flows, which would cause higher river

elevation and faster currents downstream of the dams.

Any changes in river flows and operations will appear on the Corps's Seattle District web site: www.nws.usace.army.mil See "News" and "Water Management" pages. For further information, Call Marian Valentine, Senior Water Manager, 206-764-3543.

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